Vital & Nomadic Materiality: A Cartography of Arts Based Educational Research

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Abstract This chapter traces my Arts Based Educational Research (ABER) journey through visuals and text in order to consider how it has offered and continues to offer multiple and emergent approaches to research and art practice. To do so, I re-examine projects that I conducted as part of my masters, doctoral, and postdoctoral studies that inform my current and particular position as an assistant professor in art education specializing in studio art. I take up Braidotti's (Theory, Culture & Society 36:31–61, 2018) conceptualization of the posthuman knowing subject and the methodological role that cartographies play in processes of becoming (Deleuze & Guattari in A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia, University of Minnesota Press, 1987). The process of curating my ABER journey allows for an examination of active encounters with vital matter that when presented together form a conceptual or ontological layering that Siegesmund (European Congress of Qualitative Inquiry Proceedings, pp. 101–110, 2018) posits can be best understood as a *nomadic materiality*, an affective, embodied, and ethical mode of inquiry created through a fluid sensibility.

Keywords Arts-based educational research · Posthuman knowing subject · Vital matter · Nomadic materiality · Ontological layering

> Vital matter is driven by the ontological desire for the expression of its innermost freedom…
>
> (Braidotti, 2018, p. 34)

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1   Introduction

In this chapter, I trace the trajectory of my Arts Based Educational Research (ABER) journey through visuals and text in order to consider how it has offered and continues to offer multiple and emergent approaches to research and art practice, provoking affective, embodied, and ethical processes of learning that are capable of illuminating various educational issues along the way. The process of curating my ABER journey is more than simply selecting and juxtaposing projects that I have engaged in chronologically. Rather, re-turning to these endeavours, allows for an examination of active encounters with vital matter that when presented together form a conceptual or ontological layering that Siegesmund (2018) posits can be best understood as a *nomadic materiality*, a mode of inquiry created through a fluid sensibility. I take up Braidotti's (2018) conceptualization of the posthuman knowing subject in order to examine how arts based educational inquiry is grounded on an emergent and ontological framework (Irwin, 2008, 2013). To do so, I re-examine projects that I conducted as part of my masters, doctoral, and postdoctoral studies that inform my current and particular position as an assistant professor in art education specializing in studio art.

2   Visceral Encounters with Raw Materiality

As an assistant professor in art education at the University of Victoria, I teach studio-based courses to undergraduate students across the entire university and graduate students enrolled in a studio-focused Masters of Education program. The studio component of our art education courses makes it unique to the country. My specialities reside in introductory and advanced practices in drawing, painting, ceramics, and digital arts (among a long list of other studio courses offered in the department such as design, photography, printmaking and sculpture, to name a few). These are 300 and 400 level courses that I would not be able to teach unless I had a strong knowledge and understanding of studio practices and processes coupled with the ability to contextualize these practices within curriculum and pedagogy. I have come to realize that this requires understanding the implications for learning and teaching visual art in the K-12 system and higher education in particular.

In addition to teaching, I am an interdisciplinary artist and researcher, working with paint, photography, printmaking, textiles, and digital technologies through a wide range of artistic processes and practices. My interest resides in how visual and artistic inquiry actualizes ways of seeing beyond the ordinary and habitual, providing opportunities for learning that are relational, performative, and complex. As such, my teaching, research and art practices are deeply intertwined. For over three decades, my artwork explored the concept of abandonment. I produced thousands of photographs of abandoned buildings that punctuated the Canadian landscape as they stood mid-collapse and many of these photographs in turn, inspired many large-scale

oil paintings. As a practicing photographer, I documented abandoned buildings that were deteriorating due to neglect, weather, and other natural forces such as erosion, corrosion, and disintegration. Situated as a learner, I am committed to ongoing inquiry in and through art practice and I find inspiration in the inventive engagements that art practice makes possible. This is a stance that I adopted at a young age. I started drawing at the age of two, according to my family members, before I could talk. As a child, I loved to draw and did so, often for hours on end. I started painting on my own, using mostly watercolors. When I was fourteen, I enrolled in oil painting lessons where I further developed my skills in painting and I learned how to paint from a photographic source. It was during this time that I acquired an even bigger appetite for learning about art. This led to my formal studies in a two-year pre-University college program (known in the province of Quebec as Cégep), where I studied 2D and 3D foundational artistic practices and processes, and to the pursuit of a Bachelors of Fine Arts, where I studied graphic and industrial design before focusing on Art Education.

The central focus of my master's thesis examined the relationship between my practices as a painter and photographer by documenting and analyzing the act of re-creating a photograph in paint (LeBlanc, 2008). Using a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to studio inquiry, I observed and analyzed this process, and I contextualized it within the context of visual arts and art education. To begin, I reviewed all of the paintings that I had created from a photographic source material and I analyzed them alongside one another, where the final painting and the reference photo were seen side by side and at the same scale. It is important to note that my paintings are large scale—on average 4–6 feet. Staging this review in this format and in a chronological manner enabled me to realize that as my skill in painting increased and my paintings became closer to the likeness of the photograph, I became *less* satisfied with the result.

I questioned *why* I felt compelled to paint my photographs and I began an arts-based inquiry that sought to build an understanding of the practice of painting through the perspective of a painter who relied on a photograph for reference. I examined how the dialogue between the photograph and the painting had significance to my development as an artist and I described the implications that this study had for art education. Through my art practice, I documented the unfolding of the painting process and I reflected on the three interrelated aspects of time, space, and language. In examining this process, I was able to gain understanding of myself as a learner and how I make meaning through this structure. Finally, through comparing the two images in an installation format, I revealed my process for a viewing audience.

My inquiry revealed that the photograph captured a moment, and the painting allowed me to reflect on that moment, to re-create and extend it, providing me with opportunities to look at my subject through various lenses and frames of reference. The installation, in which the source imagery was enlarged, digitally printed on canvas and stretched on a stretcher in a manner that echoed the painting (including the same dimensions), granted viewers the ability to see the photograph and the painting side-by-side as I do in my painting process and as I did in my inquiry. This pairing demonstrated my personal view of the subject in two different media

that when presented simultaneously brought forth more reflections, more insights, and more questions than when the painting was seen alone (Fig. 1). The installation demonstrated how the photograph affected my painting it allowed my audience to see what I kept, what I omitted, and what I modified.

I called this work "*Beauty in Abandonment*," because I wanted to focus on the vibrant colours, the rich textures, and the unique compositions that can be easily overlooked in abandoned buildings and in forsaken objects and materials. However, the title also drew attention to the major finding of my inquiry—that during the painting process, I abandoned the photograph for the sake of the painting. In producing this

Fig. 1 Images from my MA thesis entitled, *An investigation of the space between the painting and the photograph: Deconstructing the process and reflecting on the two media that constitute my art practice* (2008). Photo credit and copyright: Natalie LeBlanc

work, I came to realize that if my intention was to copy the photograph, then the photograph would be perceived as an ideal that the painting was attempting to duplicate. But where space and time was concerned, there was a give and take—a push and a pull—between the two media *in* and *through* practice, *in* and *through* time. This became most evident as I worked *towards* the painting and *away* from the photograph. This inquiry not only revealed the relationship that as a painter, I had with my source imagery, it juxtaposed several points of view as a way of exploring the relationship between the two media that at that time, constituted my art practice since I was a young adolescent.

For my doctoral research, I engaged in a practice-led research project in which I photographed 16 de-commissioned schools in various regions in Canada (LeBlanc, 2015, 2017, 2019). Through this endeavor, I realized that in searching out abandoned places, I was actively seeking to replace the commonplace with the uncanny, the boring with the magical, the loud with the quiet, the expected with the unexpected, the regulated with the unregulated, the normal or the sterile, with the strange and the fecund. Inside these abandoned schools, I was on a journey led by discovery and wonder. I opened drawers, cupboards, and closets; I read paperwork and writing left on chalkboards, walls, and corners. I inspected objects left in classrooms, halls and offices. I searched for traces and remnants of things that had been removed. I imagined how the school might have looked in its open state; I contemplated reasons why things had been taken away and alternately, why things had been left behind (Fig. 2). The experience placed emphasis on my individual sense of freedom. It called for movement different from the linear or rigid paths that I normally take in and through architecture. It called for crouching down low, stepping over things and weaving around through darkness. It demanded a slower, more careful, and more intimate engagement (Irwin, 2006; Triggs et al., 2014) than is normally performed in an everyday space.

Being with the ever-present absence with/in these abandoned schools inspired me to include the perspectives of a community who had been moved to the margins, in the wake of their school's closure. As such, a small rural community located in British Columbia, who witnessed their school close a year short of its centennial anniversary, was invited to take part in an immersive event in which their own stories, memories, and imaginations became an integral part of the artwork. On this occasion, I projected images that I had taken inside a de-commissioned school and projected them onto the outside physical structure, in four different areas. Visible for one evening, the projections could be viewed from street level and I took part in the reception of the work, where I visually documented the installation and observed viewers' reactions. As I talked with them, I learned about their experiences and memories of the school and its closure, and to the meanings that the abandoned school had for them and their identity as a small community. When asked, I also shared with them some of my experiences documenting abandoned schools in Canada.

The layering of the images and architecture created a rich fabric of associations. For cultural researcher, Muir (2007), digital installations have a spectral appearance in which the layering of images is a folding of time in which time is not a continuous line, but a spatially (re)imagined place. For Muir (2007), this visual layering process
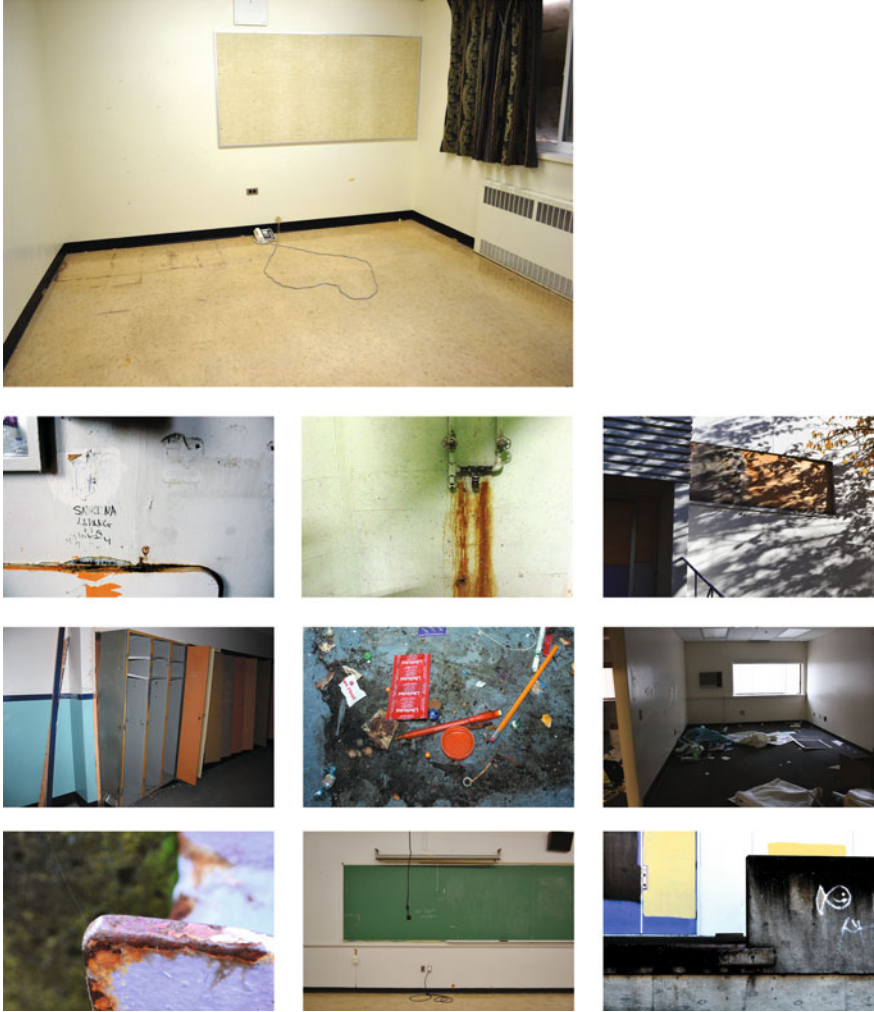
Fig. 2 Photographs from my PhD Dissertation entitled, *In/visibility of the abandoned school: Beyond representations of school closure* (2015). Photo credit and copyright: Natalie LeBlanc

creates the potential for carrying events forward into new and unknown circumstances. In projecting the inside of the abandoned school—a place locked off from the community in which it once served—I virtually created openings onto a closed and neutral-looking façade. Rather than a monument that silently validates institutions and states of authority (Ascher, 2010), my work opened a dialogue, an exchange between ideas that produced a more open-ended and complicated way of dealing with the representation of history (Beer & Chaisson, 2019) and with the condition of school closure that at the time, was greatly impacting communities.

Instead of creating a binary between the past and the present, the inside and the outside, and the private and the public, the installation linked two disparate times and places together by virtual means (Grosz, 2001). My projections disrupted the static building, creating openings into new spaces, new thoughts, and new worlds (Fig. 3). As an event, rather than something that was meant to endure or to last, it was staged *to come down*—an invitation to think about the process of life itself, to the temporal and to the fleeting, and to provoke viewers to imagine other cracks, crevices, and cavities into (and under) things that normally go unseen or unnoticed—spaces that can make connections with people, places and events in our memories and in our imaginations.

Fig. 3 Images from my site-specific installation entitled, *In/visibility of the abandoned school* (2015). Photo credit and copyright: Natalie LeBlanc

3   Vital and Nomadic Encounters

Braidotti's (2013) nomadic ethics is dependent on Deleuze's neo-Spinozist ethics in which the immanence of life is dependent on a generative and vital force referred to as *zoe*—a term borrowed from the Greek word to denote the nonhuman life that surrounds us (Trafí-Prats, 2018). Braidotti (2013) argues that nomadic ethics prioritizes relation, praxis, complexity, and processes of ontology that privilege change and motion over stability. Through an ontological lens, my MA and PhD studies underscore Braidotti's (2018) approach to knowledge-production that renders subjects as being nomadic and in-process, engaged "in perpetual motion, immanent to the vitality of self-ordering matter" (p. 36). My master's inquiry allowed me to investigate the value that I had attached to the structure of painting from a photograph, which created the opportunity for me to venture into installation art, that consequently changed my painting style. My use of color became thicker and bolder. My shapes more ambiguous. I began to use more layers, to make more surface manipulations and to create more depth. My painting became more deliberate, more gestural, and more daring. My doctoral inquiry allowed me to continue my fascination with abandoned structures and to explore some of the social, cultural, political, and psychological attributions connected to abandoned places. In this work, I ventured into digital and site-specific installation, another new platform for me to develop and explore ideas and to attend to new insights when and as they emerged in and through the involvement with materials, methods and ideas of practice.

Drawing from Braidotti (2014) and also Bennet (2010), Siegesmund (2018) argues that *nomadic materiality* favours ontology over epistemology because as artists begin their inquiry, they are less certain and even concerned about their destination or conclusions—and more open to emergence—producing more fluid and nomadic sensibilities. Braidotti's (2014) nomadic vision of the subject for which the subversive set of conventions and "the critical consciousness that resists settling into socially coded modes of thought and behaviour" (p. 182) allows for a more *fluid sensibility* forging new alliances between philosophy, the arts and science—marking a "qualitative shift in perspective" (Braidotti, 2014, p. 163).

In pursuing these projects, I realize the importance of the space of emergence (Irwin & O'Donoghue, 2012; Massumi, 2002, 2011); the spatial and temporal aspects of practice that have generated important insights, provoking me to rethink my understandings of teaching, learning, and research. My research, has taught me that art practice enables a particular form of *sight* (Irwin, 2003) that emerges *in* and *through* the processes and practices of artmaking and in the handling of materials.

As practice-led researcher Bolt (2006, 2013) argues, the handling of materials reveals a certain kind of knowledge that is neither merely perceptual nor rational. For Bolt, theorizing from practice is very different from applying theory to practice. It is a 'material thinking' that invites consideration for the relations between and within the processes of making. Sullivan (2010) refers to this as "thinking in a medium" (p. 135) that, rather than imposing ideas *in* materials, artists allow forms to emerge

from the activity of working *with* materials and by attending to the subversive possibilities afforded to them through the immediacy of this engagement. In Sullivan's (2010) opinion, this method of working creates openings, "inferences, intuitions, and opportunistic connections" (p. 136) that function beyond symbolism and cognition. Yet where Sullivan examined art practice *as* research, I look for pedagogical moments for which art practices and processes teach—where they provoke me to question and attune my attention—attending to what such forms of engagement can *do.* As my doctoral research demonstrated, this takes into consideration a multiplicity of lived experiences implicated in the process/event.

Bolt (2006) argues that there is 'magic' in the handling. Drawing from Martin Heidegger's notion of handlability, Bolt (2006) argues, "we come to know the world theoretically only after we have come to understand it through the handling" (p. 4). This counters instrumentalist conceptions of human-tool relationships and underscores the relational qualities of art practice. Bolt posits that "'skill with' rather than 'mastery over' technologies, materials and processes" (p. 4) have implications for understanding creative and artistic practices in posthuman terms because the relationships that artists have with their materials is a *co-responsibility* where the artist and the materials become co-collaborators in the revealing of Being. This is the 'magic' that Bolt argues material practices embody as a mode of engagement dependent on the specificity of the artist's experiences and particular sensitivities that provoke them to question, search for, and ultimately create the approaches—that will enable them to attend to *what* emerges—as they work *in* and *with* materials.

Working *with* materials resonates with how relationships between humans and non-humans are being taken up in the context of posthumanism that are challenging human exceptionalism and anthropocentric dominance (Barad, 2003, 2007; Kind, 2018; Penti, 2018; Roussel, 2018). Thinking in materials evokes particular invitations and inventions, where something unexpected and generative takes place, thereby contributing to self-knowledge while forming and informing the research (LeBlanc & Irwin, 2019a). Bennet's (2004, 2010) vital materialism and notion of 'thing-power' as a type of agency is a concept that has greatly informed this stance because it helps speak to the continuum that creates a kinship *between* people and things. Thing-power is a force and an intensity that *activates* (Hofsess, 2017)—as a vital power of life. Thing-power is a reminder that *things* are always more than mere objects. It is also a reminder that being human is also materiality for which we possess a thing-power of our own. In this sense, the lived body is an active source of knowledge-making (Springgay, 2019; Zaliwska & Springgay, 2015), rendering the body's being-in and being-with the world as an immersive relationality (Irwin, 2008) with a trajectory towards unknown places, people and things rendered on infinite possibility.

4 Neo-Materialist Cartographies

In proposing a theoretical framework for the critical posthumanities, Braidotti (2018) argues that the posthuman subject is an entity that is relationally embodied, embedded, affective and accountable. This claim draws from the two following inter-related assumptions: First, that the Anthropocene is multi-layered and inclusive to the environment as well as the affective and psychic dimensions of the subject. The second pertains to the methodological role that cartographies play in processes of becoming and discursive *objects of exchange* (Braidotti, 2018, p. 32) that form nomadic *assemblages* of a multiplicity of forces (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

For Braidotti (2018) and also Irwin (2013) a cartographic account is a theoretically-based and politically-informed stance located in the present that maps the production of knowledge and subjectivity. Drawing from Deleuze's analysis of the present and its interplay between the actual and the virtual, Braidotti (2018) argues that a "cartography is the record of both what we are ceasing to be and what we are in the process of becoming" (p. 37). For Irwin (2013), a cartography "is about experimentation: altering, reversing, modifying, among individuals and groups, across time and space" (p. 211). Although both my Masters and PhD studies certainly reveal an element of becoming that was embedded within flows or processes of differentiation—this became most prevalent in a study that I engaged in as a post-doctoral scholar that resonates with the more nuanced concept of *becoming-world* that Braidotti (2018) describes as a "thinking of, in, and *for* the world" (p. 39, italics added).

O Canada! Reimagining Canadian Identity: A Cosmopolitan Approach to Teaching and Learning was the title of a federally-funded research project comprising of an interdisciplinary team of scholars spanning across arts education including the visual arts, drama, music, and poetry. For the purpose of this chapter, I would like to focus on some of the work that emerged in working closely with Drs. Rita Irwin (primary investigator), co-investigators George Belliveau, Peter Gouzouasis, and Carl Leggo, as well as collaborators David Beare, Ching Chiu-Lin, David Murphy and William F. Pinar, in which we staged workshops to investigated how art could create a space for exploring and also strengthening identification with place.

Contemporary artists were invited into the Bachelor of Education program as artists-in-residence to provoke complex understandings of contemporary national identity with general and secondary pre-service teacher candidates (LeBlanc & Irwin, 2019b). This was particularly potent given that 2017 was Canada's 150th anniversary as a country. For example, in a drama education workshop, student teachers with little to no prior experience in theatre, were introduced to the concept of a *viewpoint*, which emphasizes the idea that in K-12 drama education, the most important thing to remind students is not to act, but rather, to play a character who speaks from a specific viewpoint. Teacher candidates were encouraged to share an individual viewpoint of the Canadian identity such as being ethical, polite, bland, accepting, apologetic and frustrated. They shared how their viewpoints were framed from their own lived experiences as Canadian residents from different provinces, cities, and towns as well as

being Indigenous, non-Indigenous, and visitors, temporarily studying in Canada from other countries. The dialogue that unfolded allowed each person to recognize how everyone in the class had a viewpoint that was different from their own, becoming a springboard for other exercises in which students were encouraged to draw from their individual and collective histories that culminated in a collaborative and emergent drama production (Fig. 4).

A *cosmopolitan imagination* (Meskimmon, 2010), was a pivotal concept throughout this study for which we came together as a group of artist-scholars to provoke taken-for-granted conventions, beliefs and values that govern our country, ultimately finding that as an immigrant nation in a world of constant change, we still had much work to do as citizens to ensure we work toward even greater understanding of one another and as we attend to our differences.

Fig. 4 Documentation from *O'Canada! Reimagining Canadian identity: A cosmopolitan approach to teaching and learning*, Artists-in-Residence, UBC (2016–2019). Photo credits and copyright: Natalie LeBlanc and Ching-Chiu Lin

In addition to staging and documenting events at the University, I spent one day a week for three months in an elementary school working with approximately 300 students from kindergarten to grade 7 alongside artist-in-residence Alison Shields. We used this time to talk about Canada and what it means to be Canadian as we performed weekly workshops, providing opportunities for students to look at art, to talk about art, and to make art. Students made portraits and landscapes (both figurative and abstract), and they experimented with a variety of materials such as paint, pastel, and collage. The final product combined photography, where each student held an artwork in front of their face, and technology, where the green screen behind them was replaced with another artwork, thereby immersing the children in their artwork. The final exhibition was a school wide event that coincided with their end of year performance on the theme of 'Being Canadian' that displayed the images by the children that came to represent an emergent process of coming to understand diversity through a multiplicity of interpretations, representations and potentialities.

In the summer of 2019, I exhibited a body of artwork that addressed some of these ideas involving my own studio practice including painting, photography, print-making, and installation (Figs. 5 and 6). For one of these works, I collaborated with musician-scholar David Murphy to assemble experimental video with sound compiled and artistically re-mixed from several of the artist-in-residences and peda-gogical events. Recorded conversations, voices, and musical tracks were woven in and between an assortment of visuals made and documented by various partici-pants engaged in the study. This was very much an emergent project in which the product was not a predetermined entity with outcomes clearly stated or even imag-ined beforehand but one that unfolded through a shared process of sensibilities, ideas, and practices.

In another one of these works, I made a series of four large-scale acrylic paintings inspired by the images produced by the aforementioned elementary students. Situated somewhere between portrait and landscape painting, they are a nod to the historical significance that landscape painting has come to play in the nationalization of the Canadian identity, particularly by artists such as the Group of Seven who popularized wilderness painting in the twentieth century (O'Brian & White, 2007), which has become a staple in the K-12 art education curriculum in most Canadian provinces, making it almost impossible to parse out the Canadian identity from the iconography of a wild, empty and northern landscape.

These paintings, share a similarity with what contemporary Canadian artist Douglas Coupland (2014) in his exhibition, *Everywhere is Anywhere is Anything is Everything,* refers to as an *antiportrait,* in which the visual resemblance of the subject has been intentionally obstructed by an object, modified, and painted over, playing with the surface and consequent depth of the pictorial plane. Instead of providing any definitive answers, these paintings ask viewers to think creatively about what it might mean to be Canadian living in a globalized world. In each *antiportrait,* a small land-scape is carefully held in place, masking the subject's face, creating an entirely new world. Ambiguous shapes, forms, colours, tones, and lines replace what-would-be facial features, removing any defining characteristic or likeness. Yet, some elements

Fig. 5 *Canadian antiportraits.* Acrylic Paint on Canvas (2019). Top: *Linda,* 48″ × 70″ Bottom: *Mansha,* 50″ × 67″. Photo credit and copyright: Natalie LeBlanc

can still be seen in the perimeter of the landscape—clothing, hair, hands, and skin—telling us *something* about who each subject *might* be. Each painting is named after the student who helped inspire it—*Linda, Mansha, Elizabeth, Prath*—each one as radically different as it is similar to the others in the series, a strange hybrid of a portrait and a landscape that is both real *and* imaginary; virtual *and* real; figurative *and* abstract.

Along with the other works in the exhibition, this series invited viewers to draw on their faculties of imagination to address the complexity of being Canadian during

Fig. 6 *Canadian antiportraits.* Acrylic Paint on Canvas (2019). Bottom left: *Elizabeth*, 44″ × 62″. Bottom right: *Prath*, 54″ × 62″. Photo credit and copyright: Natalie LeBlanc

and post Canada 150 without attempting to define it in any one, singular way. Such engagement asks that viewers draw on their own situated and lived experience, offering a non-universalistic perspective (Braidotti et al., 2013; Meskimmon, 2010), one that emerged through an exploration of the specificity of experience as well as the affective, embedded and embodied perspectives of students, teachers, pre-service teachers, artists, faculty members, researchers, and community members who actively and openly engaged with a multiplicity of ideas, creating new affective assemblages and ethical codes (Braidotti, 2018).

Massumi (2011) argues, "art is the technique of living life *in*—experiencing the vitality of it more fully. Living it more intensely" (p. 45, italics in original). This speaks directly to the affective and embodied qualities of art as a *world-making* practice (Manning et al., 2019) provoking engagements based on "potentialities rather than procedures" (Irwin, 2008, p. 72)—something that Irwin (2008) has long argued as a *commitment* to a way of being in the world and something that I have come to understand within the context of Braidotti's (2018) posthuman subject as a faithfulness to *potential*—an empowering mode of becoming that respects difference while countering established, institutionalised modes that do not.

Drawing from conceptual artist Joseph Beuys, Lucero (2017) proposes that we should "think of art as a science of freedom" (p. 208) that *can test the pliability of the world* as an active engagement with materiality that is both formal and conceptual. As an assistant professor in art education in the department of curriculum and instruction at the University of Victoria, I realize how my current artistic research practices have directly benefited from my previous experiences with visual forms of arts-based educational modes of inquiry. The unifying theme of my current research explores the intersections of art, research and education in which I focus on the potentiality of contemporary art, inclusive to visual art and other artistic/creative/digital media in order to engage art educators and art education students in critical discourses through creative processes and shared experiences. My hope is that such forms of engagement can strengthen relationships between artistic practice(s), social engagement, and knowledge production, while continuing *to test the pliability* of arts-based and arts-based educational modes of research.

In the wake of the projects discussed in this chapter, I have grown concerned with examining the potentials of contemporary art to better understand human and non-human agency in the context of neo-materialism. It is my intention to emphasize how a vital and nomadic materiality can advance engagement with a diversity of ideas, questions, materials, and pursuits, while appreciating the complexity, uncertainty, partiality, and generativity of the *thick present* (Haraway, 2016). As such, many of the research ideas that I am entertaining reflect a shift towards multi- and transdisciplinary approaches to artmaking, teaching and learning that will enable explorations of the experiences of students who are learning to teach and learning to learn (Irwin, 2013; Irwin & O'Donoghue, 2012), many in an international setting, through the creation of 2D and 3D visual forms and new and multi-media including, but not limited to, sound, performance and digital art. I would like to further explore how such practices connect (and disconnect) with the posthumanities, technoscience, environmental and Indigenous epistemologies, creating rich sites for artistic and educational inquiry with the potential of mapping new cartographies.

5   Conclusion

In this chapter, I shared three research projects that demonstrate how arts-based educational modes of inquiry produce multi- and transdisciplinary modes of teaching and learning, allowing for experimentation, improvisation, and exploration with an openness to emergence—the unfolding of events, in and through practice, in and through time. Vital and nomadic materiality requires affirmative ethics (Braidotti, 2018) ontological movement that propels the individuation of ideas, memories, perceptions and experiences. In this chapter, I demonstrated how each project brought me into new territories of learning, teaching me that when I trust the process, I come to new understandings. As a cartography of practice, this chapter reveals how forces, desires, and values can shift, change and mutate through the particularities of practice and the encounters that it provokes. Re-visiting these arts-based projects in the context of the posthuman subject, has made me realize that I am exactly where I need to be.

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Committee Members: Dónal O'Donoghue & Anne Phelan

Granting University: The University of British Columbia.

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